

Message Text

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INFO OCT-01 IO-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AID-05 CEA-01 COME-00 EB-07 EA-06 FRB-03 NEA-09

OPIC-03 TRSE-00 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 STR-04

SAM-01 AGR-05 ARA-06 /124 W

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R 111839Z APR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

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INFO USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 05557

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: UNGA, EGEN

SUBJECT: BRITISH IDEAS ON COMMODITIES

REF: LONDON 5454, 5477

1. DURING MY MEETING WITH FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN
TODAY HE SPELLED OUT SOME OF THE POLITICAL ASPECTS OF
BRITISH THINKING ABOUT COMMODITIES, NOTING THAT EMBASSY
ECONOMIC MINISTER AND MAITLAND HAD THE DAY BEFORE DIS-
CUSSED THE MATTER IN SOME DETAIL.

2. CALLAGHAN SAID THAT THE US IS MORE FULLY IN THE
PICTURE ON BRITISH THINKING THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY. THEY
ARE MOST ANXIOUS TO GET OUR REACTION AND THEREFORE LOOK
FORWARD TO MAITLAND'S MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON NEXT WEEK.
AT THE EC-9 FOREIGN MINISTERS WEEKEND MEETING IN DUBLIN,
CALLAGHAN PROPOSES TO GIVE THE NINE THE OUTLINES OF
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BRITISH THINKING. HE SAID THAT THE BRITISH WOULD NOT BE

PUT OFF BY THEIR EC PARTNERS BUT WOULD BE RESPONSIVE TO US VIEWS. HE ALSO INTENDS TO SPEAK TO THE NEW ZEALANDERS, AUSTRALIANS AND JAMAICANS IN ADVANCE OF THE JAMAICA COMMONWEALTH HEADS OF GOVERNMENT MEETING BUT NOT IN GREAT DETAIL.

3. IN VIEW OF THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING AT THE PREPARATORY CONFERENCE ON ENERGY, CALLAGHAN THOUGHT THERE WAS FURTHER REASON WHY THE UK SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THIS EXERCISE AND USE THE COMMONWEALTH MEETING TO PREPARE FOR FURTHER INTERNATIONAL DISCUSSIONS LEADING UP TO THE UNGA SPECIAL SESSION. CALLAGHAN EXPRESSED SOME OPTIMISM ABOUT THE PROSPECT OF DEVELOPING SOME GENERAL PLANS ON COMMODITIES AT THE JAMAICA MEETING. THE LESS DEVELOPED COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES ARE A VARIED GROUP OF PRODUCERS INCLUDING A MAJOR OPEC COUNTRY.

4. I AGREED WITH CALLAGHAN THERE ARE GOOD SUBSTANTIVE REASONS FOR TAKING THE COMMODITIES QUESTION UP AT THE JAMAICA CONFERENCE BUT I ALSO OBSERVED THAT THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE BRITISH ROLE IN THE COMMONWEALTH WOULD BE BENEFICIAL TO THE US AS WELL. CALLAGHAN OBSERVED THAT A FEW YEARS AGO BRITAIN WOULD NEVER HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE THIS KIND OF AN INITIATIVE SINCE MANY COUNTRIES WOULD HAVE ASSUMED THAT IT WAS DOING SO MERELY TO TRY TO ASSERT A ROLE IN THE WORLD WHICH ITS POWER NO LONGER ENTITLED IT TO. NOW, HOWEVER, HE THOUGHT THE COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES WOULD TAKE SUCH AN INITIATIVE SERIOUSLY WITHOUT FEELING THAT THE BRITISH WERE MERELY TRYING TO PLAY A ROLE.

5. CALLAGHAN CONCLUDED BY SAYING THAT AS FAR AS COMMODITIES ARE CONCERNED, THE BRITISH IDEA IS THAT ONE MIGHT WORK THROUGH THE UN TO CONVENE A SPECIAL CONFERENCE NEXT YEAR IF THE CONSUMER-PRODUCERS CONFERENCE ON ENERGY FAILS TO MATERIALIZE. HE FELT THAT A CONFERENCE ON COMMODITIES MIGHT OFFER A FORUM TO ADDRESS THE ENERGY QUESTION IN SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT CONTEXT.

6. AS I WAS LEAVING CALLAGHAN TOLD ME THAT HE HAD SENT
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A MESSAGE TO THE SECRETARY EXPRESSING THE READINESS OF THE PRIME MINISTER AND HIMSELF TO STOP OFF IN WASHINGTON BRIEFLY AFTER THE JAMAICA CONFERENCE TO DISCUSS DEVELOPMENTS AT JAMAICA AS WELL AS ANY OTHER TOPICS OF MUTUAL INTEREST TO THE US AND THE UK.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, COMMODITIES, ECONOMIC REPORTS, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 APR 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: MartinML
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975LONDON05557
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D750127-1047
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19750459/aaaaccea.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 75 LONDON 5454, 75 5477
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: MartinML
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 17 APR 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <17 APR 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2003 by MartinML>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BRITISH IDEAS ON COMMODITIES
TAGS: EGEN, UNGA
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006